

U.S. Application No.:
PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

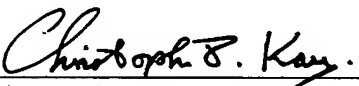
Attorney Docket: 3968.099

REMARKS

Claims 1-15 are amended herein to conform to U.S. requirements and practice. Claim 16 is canceled herein without prejudice or disclaimer in favor of new claim 17, which is supported by claim 16 as filed. New claims 18-23 represent preferred embodiments deleted from among claims 1-15 in order to conform claims 1-15 to U.S. practice. Support for new claims 18-23 is therefore found, for example, in claims 1-15 as filed. Care has been taken to ensure that no new matter has been added.

Entry and favorable consideration are requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: December 5, 2003

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EXPRESS MAIL CERTIFICATE

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DATE OF DEPOSIT: **December 5, 2003**

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing Preliminary Amendment is being deposited with the United States Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service under 37 CFR 1.10 on the date indicated and is addressed: **Mail Stop: Patent Application, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.**

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees that may be required at any time during the prosecution of this application without specific authorization, except for the issue fee, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account Number 16-0877.



Bonnie L. Horst